

CONGREGATIONALISM VERY ABLY

(Continued from first page.)

doctrines of Christianity—practising love to God and man. A writer on our polity defined the church as the manward side of the kingdom and the kingdom as the Godward side of the church. Then our church is both democratic and theocratic in its polity. As to our dealings among ourselves it is democratic; as to God's dealings with us it is theocratic. On its manward side our church is governed "by the people, of the people, and for the people." It affirms the adage Vox ecclesiae, vox Christi on the one hand, and supports the Protestant axiom of the right of private judgment on the other. We are independent under Christ and we govern ourselves as we are controlled by the Holy Spirit. By



REV. A. C. GARNER.

holding to autonomy we know we give up other advantages, but we rationally stick to our reasonable preference. We have only two permanent offices, viz: pastors and deacons. All the other work is done by committees and these are made as our needs demands. By having the simplest government and the least number of officers consistent with New Testament history, we reduce authority to a minimum.

In fact in our polity there is no authority but that of love. We hate arbitrary rule. We respect law, but it must be law with liberty. We have no legislative tribunal, no hide bound creeds; and no corporation of priests exercise power over us. We like Christ's statement to his disciples "Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them; not so shall it be among you. Self-government throws the responsibility for the success or failure of the church on the individual members. Hence there is opportunity for individual development. The temper of the age is growing more individualistic and it is to the Congregational liking. Our polity allows every man to qualify for service under the headship of Jesus Christ.

The wonderful simplicity and flexibility of our polity enables us "to prove all things and hold fast that which is good." With the right to have any kind of worship we have usually chosen the non-liturgical. With the privilege of elaborating at will, we have generally followed the order of the early churches viz: (1) regular attendance on the teaching of the apostles; (2) regular prayer meetings, (3) regular observance of the Lord's supper; (4) generous contributions for the needs of the church and its poor. Our polity permits individual churches to experiment without creating a row in the whole denomination. The kind of preaching that turned

Dr. Thomas out of the Methodist Church and ran Prof. Swing out of the Presbyterian Church, Henry Ward Beecher died in our church without even losing fellowship. We give every man a chance and if his work be of God it will stand and if it is not of God it will come to nought any how, and no other church is disturbed. To illustrate further—in one of our churches Dr. Clark organized the first Y. P. S. C. E. it proved to be a good thing and is now an international organization. Another of our pastors sought to organize a church in which the only test for membership was that the applicant promised to endeavor to lead a good life, the plan failed. The Christian endeavor in the church succeeded; the Christian endeavor church failed, and the denomination has been helped by the former and undisturbed by the latter. Congregationalism is venturesome. It tests the "spirit whether they be of God."

The simplicity of our polity makes it the best suited to newly populated sections of our country. It is a good pioneer. When people of different denominations find it necessary to combine for economical reasons—to drop non-essentials and come together on a common platform, the result is a Congregational Church. Hence our polity exhibits its mediating advantages. We invite the federation of Christendom on our simple New Testament ground. The fact of our mediating power presupposes a leavening influence and we have to some extent liberalized the government of other churches. Our polity is also spiritual for it requires spiritual power to hold together people and churches so absolutely free—to mould clay is not difficult as to bind together sand. Our polity is the result of the union of free intelligence and religious passion.

Now since independence is a principle upon which we stand, it follows that we are indeed jealous of liberty. When Phillips Brooks said: "Liberty is the passion of the age" he complimented a cherished principle of our polity. We set aside many good things in order to be free. We believe in freedom of approach to the throne of God, free speech, free thought, free theology, free churches, free schools, free men, free country. We are called into liberty. Unalterably opposed to the tyranny of tradition, we are the advance guard of the churches. Never too proud to learn fresh means of usefulness, we are among the leaders in practical Christian work. Forever free from stereotyped services or inelastic forms, we adapt ourselves to all conditions of men, that we may save some. We emphasized most strenuously the right of independence but we also sympathetically urge the duty of fellowship. Fellowship, with us, is not the tie of law, but the tie of love. It is the oneness of our relation to Jesus Christ. Our churches have a community of interest and must be co workers together. We cannot be bound to Christ and not to one another. Fellowship is the realization of John 17-20 21. Fellowship means commonalty, communion and in Roman 15:16 contribution (κοινωνία). The strong must help the weak, hence our wonderful missionary system leading all denominations.

Now I must not lead you to infer that we never have any trouble in our churches or that we need any help. When we have contention or the need of help, we have councils composed of pastor and delegates from neighboring Congregational churches. If a church is to be formed, a pastor ordained and settled, or dismissed, the work is done by

an ecclesiastical council. When there is a difference of opinion on some important matter in the church, or between the pastor and members and they agree to submit their difference to their neighboring churches—this is a mutual council. When a church gets so loose in doctrine that its neighbor is disturbed and feels that it has violated the unwritten law of fellowship, after remonstrance, the aggrieved church may call an advisory council. When members or a minority of members are offended and cannot get a mutual council, they can have an exparte council. Any decision of any council is only advisory, but in fact it is usually as binding as law. In selecting our ministers we encourage a high standard of intellectual training, and remind the churches of Paul's caution; "Lay hands suddenly on no man."

Finally, what is the mission and what is the fruit of the Congregational polity? The mission of Congregationalism is to teach and cultivate and perpetuate the apostolic simplicity, purity and divine democracy of the Christian church both in principles "to elevate society, to regulate education, to civilize humanity, to purify law, to reform both church and state; to assert and defend liberty, to mould and redeem everything that belongs to man in his individual and social relations." It seems to us that our right to exist is found in these reasons for existing. We ask only to be known by our fruits. Our polity is a living fact hallowed by the beloved of its martyrs. It trusts the people. It is a great missionary force. It encourages education and has 42 colleges in the United States, standing as monuments of Congregational devotion to the god of wisdom. In every great reform movement we have given men of brains and muscle and money.

In war and in peace there have been Congregationalists on the order of Cromwell and John Owen. True to the love of liberty our churches preached freedom for the slave when it was unpopular to do so, and when great Webster grew weak on the subject Leonard Bacon waxed strong. In works of charity, in deeds of nobility, in contributions to the literature and inventions of the world our polity deserves honorable mention. Of those who have risen to greatness in preaching, without college training our polity names Bunyan, Spurgeon, and Moody. Of the twenty-nine names of great men already chosen for the Hall of fame in New York University Height, we notice three divines—Jonathan Edwards, William E. Channing and Henry Ward Beecher, and strange to say each of these is associated with the Congregational polity. In perusing the literature of the

KARL XANDER

IMPORTER,

Rectifier and Wholesale Dealer in

Fine Wines and Liquors,

1530-32 SEVENTH STREET, N. W.,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

AGENT FOR SOUTHERN BOUQUET WHISKY.

world, when we come across the names of John Milton the poet, Bunyan the dreamer, Daniel Defoe, J. G. Holland, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Isaac Watts we may say these are among the choice fruit produced by some who were elevated to the Congregational polity.

SPECIAL ADVERTISEMENTS.

WANTED HELP.

WANTED—Trustworthy colored man to travel and appoint agents in the District of Columbia. \$50 monthly and expenses, position permanent, enclose self addressed envelope for reply. Manager Cross, Star Building, Chicago.

Enclose 2c stamp for repl, and we will send particulars telling how you can make from \$75 to \$150 per month, and also be presented with a fine Gold Watch. Address,

SCOTT REMEDY CO.,
Box 570, Louisville, Ky.

ROOMS FOR RENT.

Furnished room suitable for man and wife or single gentleman, 1134 23d st. n. w.

Wanted Rooms.

Persons desiring to secure first class rooms in any part of the city will do well to put an announcement in these columns.

If you have a spare room that you would like to rent to desirable parties, advertise them in The Colored American.

Help Wanted.

Do you want work? Do you want a job? If so, advertise the fact in these columns.

Wanted an active, intelligent young man to collect for a reliable business firm. Good place for the right man.

Wanted a Partner.

Wanted a partner for a business already established and paying well. Must have some cash and be able to take a position on salary. Address C, care this office. (Confidential.)

SPECIAL.

There are letters at this office for Mr. Harry Radcliff, Hon. William Harris and Mrs. Flora Batson.

An energetic colored woman who understands canvassing can secure permanent employment with good pay by addressing "Benevolence" care 459 O st. n. w.

Cora E. Dorsey and Christine Dorsey Typewriting, Copying and Stenographic work satisfactorily performed at reasonable rates by the Meses Dorsey, Room 8, Le Droit Building, Corner 8th and F street northwest.

Agents Wanted.

Active agents are wanted in every city and town in the United States for The Colored American, the greatest and newest colored newspaper published. Write for terms, Address The Colored American, 459 C street, n. w., Washington, D. C.

Colored man who reads and writes to prepare for traveling \$50 monthly and expenses. Send self addressed envelope. President Mac-Brad, 386 Dearborn, Chicago.